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ABSTRACT

Besides carrying out specific duties stemming from their positions, student service personnel participate on numerous committees whose activities are related to the university. A survey of permanent and/or professional staff members in student services reveals that individuals serve on over 200 committees with a wide range of purposes. Committees are listed by purpose and also classified according to both the individuals who made the appointments and the distribution of assignments among offices. The data indicate that the committee serve, at least partially, the function of integrating services, although there is some concentration of committee assignments among a limited number of individuals. (Author/MSE)

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Student Service Personnel on Committees: Integration and Outreach

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Student Life Studies and Planning

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Abstract

Besides carrying out specific duties stemming from their positions, student service personnel participate on numerous committees whose activities are related to the University. Given the heterogeneity of the services of bureaus within the Office for Student Affairs, committees are viewed here as providing both a means of integrating bureaus within OSA and of establishing contact with wider segments of the University. Based on data derived from a questionnaire, the study reveals the distribution of committee assignments among student service personnel and bureaus, the general purposes and membership of committees, and the hours and representational roles involved in committee work.

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Student Service Personnel on Committees: Integration and Outreach

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Administrative bodies have generally been viewed as structured arrangements of parts, variously called departments, sections, divisions, or bureaus. Organization charts can be drawn up to reflect the internal organization of these parts and the structural relationships among them. In an administrative body made up of fairly distinct units, lines can be drawn connecting the units to show the presumed channels of communications and cooperation in administrative activities.

In a highly heterogeneous organization such as the Office for Student Affairs, such an organization chart is unlikely to reveal all activities engaged in or areas influenced by personnel. Much of this activity is carried out within groups which in various ways are separate from the Office's formal structure. These groups are generally designated as committees, task forces, boards, or councils, and they would not necessarily appear in organization charts.

Employing a sociological approach to committees, interest is drawn to two aspects of their functions. First, given the heterogeneity of the activities of student service bureaus, committees can be examined in terms of how they serve to integrate the bureaus. It can be argued that service on a committee by personnel from different bureaus contributes to the development of "a sense of belonging" to the same administrative body. Committees can be viewed as "fields of interaction"

in which information about bureaus' activities and concerns is exchanged. They can also provide the basis for or reinforce informal social networks which supplement formal relationships among bureaus in bringing disparate parts together in a cooperative administrative body. The committees with membership composed entirely of student service personnel provide the greatest possibility for promoting the integration of the bureaus. To a lesser extent, committees with membership also including individuals not in student services can similarly serve this function. The data on committee membership provide an understanding of the extent to which this integrating function is in operation. This is revealed by examining the number of student service personnel who serve on committees with members from other bureaus.

The second aspect concerns committees' functions in providing input by student service personnel in University activities outside of those specifically within the administrative domains of the bureaus. In other words, student service personnel's participation on committees provides one means of articulation with other segments of the University. Such involvement is a predictable development of an orientation toward student services, which by their nature touch all parts of the University. Williamson (1961) has suggested that student service personnel have an obligation to examine annually the relationships between students, faculty, and administrators. Their own participation on committees is one aspect of these relationships, and the data reveal the extent of this articulation.

Methodology

In December 1976, a list was compiled of all student service personnel serving on committees appointed by the Vice President for

Student Affairs. In January 1977, a questionnaire was sent to student service personnel asking them to identify all committees on which they had served whose activities had some relationship to the University.

The major purpose of the questionnaire was to develop a fuller picture of the extent of student service personnel's activities through participation on committees. While committee work is not inclusive of all University-related activity supplementing formal administrative or service roles, identification of committees is a contribution toward recognizing some of the varied activities of personnel.

Questionnaires were sent to 213 people in student service bureaus whom we identified as permanent and/or professional staff. Secretaries and graduate assistants were not included. The one-page questionnaire asked people to list committees on which they were serving and to respond to some specific questions for each committee. One hundred seventy-five people responded to the questionnaire, making a return rate of over 82%. The rates of response according to bureau are shown in Appendix I.

People were instructed to list all committees on which they had served since January 1, 1976. Since committees vary in their lifespans and frequencies of meetings, a specific and fairly long period of time was required in order to reflect the range of committee assignments. This means that some of the committees appearing in the data are no longer functioning, and committee assignments made after about March 1, 1977, are not included.

The two aspects of committee functions, integration and outreach, are shown by mapping the distribution of committee assignments among individuals and bureaus. The committee assignments are also grouped

according to appointing official and membership mix. Besides distribution, the responses to the questionnaire also reveal information about appointing procedures, monthly meeting hours of committees, and perceived roles on committees.

Results

Purposes of Committees

The number of committees on which respondents served during the designated period was 237. Perhaps it can be assumed that the 38 people who did not respond were not likely to have been on committees or were on committees already included in the identified total. Thus, for all personnel the total number of committees was probably not much more than 237.

Common to all of these committees is that they exist apart from formal administrative structures. The committee structures and membership are not automatically defined by the structures of the bureaus or by the professional roles of personnel. Committees have separate existences with links to formal administrative units of varying strengths and precision. For example, the Committee for the Physically Handicapped is not as closely tied to the Vice President's office in terms of reporting and serving the needs of that office as is the Issues Committee. The separateness of committees from formal administrative structures is therefore relative, but at the very least the notion of committee implies a distinction between it and existing administrative structures.

Similarly, committees reflect a wide range of purposes. A categorization of the general purposes of committees on which student service personnel served is provided in Table I. While designed to reveal the

Table I

General Purposes of Committees

		Percentage of Committees Having Each Purpose
1.	To make recommendations for establishing or changing policies and procedures.	31%
2.	To plan and coordinate special projects, events, curriculum, building construction, safety programs, information systems, etc.	26
3.	To act as a governing or advisory board.	9
4.	To regulate certain activities according to standards set by the committee or by another body.	7
5.	To evaluate scholastic achievement or advise on admissions to programs.	5
6.	To evaluate programs and activities.	5
7.	To provide advice or assistance to particular categories of clients.	4
8.	To make recommendations regarding promotion and tenure.	4
9.	To award scholarships, prizes, and honors.	4
10.	To conduct personnel searches.	4
11.	To serve as an administrative body or clearinghouse for a diffuse and generally large group.	3
12.	To plan programs for staff and student development.	3
13.	To approve allocation of funds.	2
14.	To plan and put into effect training projects.	2
15.	To act as advocate to bring certain issues to the attention of others.	2
16.	To conduct or oversee research activities.	2
17.	To consider grievances and appeals.	1
18.	To act as an editorial board.	1

variety of general purposes of committees, the list could be extended depending on the degree of specificity required. A single committee, of course, may have more than one of these purposes. The percentages reveal the proportion of the 237 committees to which each purpose can be attributed. The percentages are by no means exact, but are intended to give a picture of the roles committees are playing. Admittedly, a different categorization of purposes would give a different picture.

Committee Assignments

Of the 175 respondents, 111 (or 63%) indicated that they had served on at least one committee. That is, these 111 people spread themselves among the 237 committees on which student service personnel participated. In all, these 111 people had 430 separate committee assignments among them.

These assignments have been classified according to officials who made the appointments. This breakdown reveals that 30% of the assignments were made by bureau directors, 22.6% by the Vice President for Student Affairs, 16% by the President, and 14.7% by academic departments. These and figures for other appointing officials are shown in Table II.

While it is not possible to give equal weight to each committee assignment because of the differing demands participation on committees make on members, some sense of the distribution of committee assignments can be achieved. Table III shows for each bureau the number of respondents who had committee assignments, the number of separate committees on which a bureau had participating personnel, and the number of committee assignments among personnel. While not conclusive, the figures seem to reveal that most bureaus find their activities facilitated by participation on

Table II

Committee Assignments Broken Down by Appointing Officials

Appointing Official	Number of Appointments	Percentage of all Appointments
Bureau Director	129	30.0%
Vice President for Student Affairs	97	22.6
President	69	16.0
Academic Department	63	14.7
Non-administrative and Non-academic Body	24	5.6
Respondent (Yourself)	20	4.7
Other	12	2.8
Academic Vice President	6	1.4
Don't Know	12	2.8
	430	

Table III

Committees and Committee Assignments in Each Bureau

Bureau	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents with Committee Assignments	Number of Committees	Number of Committee Assignments among Bureau Personnel
Central Office	2	2	27	27
Admissions and Records	28	17	47	59
Boynton Health Service	43	21	44	65
Campus Assistance Center	3	3	14	15
Unions	7	3	16	21
Housing	16	14	27	43
International Student Adviser's Office	6	5	16	17
Martin Luther King Program	2	2	7	7
Minnesota Women's Center	2	2	12	15
Orientation	2	2	1	2
Recreational Sports	6	3	9	11
St. Paul Office for Student Affairs	1	1	5	5
Special Counseling	1	1	3	3
Student Activities Center	6	6	22	26
Student Counseling Bureau	32	18	57	84
Student Financial Aid Office	12	6	11	11
Student Life Studies and Planning	4	4	14	16
Student Organization Finance	2	1	3	3
	175	111		430

committees. Another perspective, however, might be that this use of committees merely reflects an unexamined institutional custom or practice.

The degree to which committee assignments potentially function as mechanisms for integrating the bureaus can be shown by the number of committees on which two or more staff members from different bureaus were serving. Of the 237 committees, 53 had two or more personnel from different bureaus, with 77 different staff members involved in these committees. If personnel from the Central Office are not considered, the number of committees drops to 41, involving 67 different individuals. That is, of all those who responded 38% served on committees with personnel from bureaus other than their own (excluding the Central Office), and of those indicating they had committee assignments 64% served on such committees.

Six people had 20% of the committee assignments. These six individuals represent only 5% of the 111 people who had committee assignments. Less than 21% of those on committees (23 people) served in 43% of the assignments. Most of the people within this 21% can be considered senior personnel in that they have been with the University for fairly long periods of time and are generally in upper level administrative positions. A 1973 study of University Senate committees similarly found committees and their leadership positions largely filled by full professors (Eckert & Hanson, 1973).

This concentration of assignments among some of the busiest personnel may partly account for the absenteeism which occurs at meetings as well as the difficulty of finding meeting times convenient for all members.

Membership

Ideally, committees can provide forums in which administrators, student service personnel, students, faculty, and people from the community work together for common goals. Some of the role and status distinctions among committee members may become blurred in the process. In effect, committees provide formal or quasi-formal structures for the interaction of various segments of the University populace and those concerned with University activities (see Penn and Cornthwaite, 1976). The questionnaire identified some of these segments and asked people to indicate which classifications of people were also members of each committee on which they served.

The data are presented in Table IV in terms of the number of committee assignments on committees having each of the classifications of people. Also indicated is a tabulation of the number of assignments on committees having both faculty and students. Not surprisingly, the majority of assignments were on committees on which faculty were also serving. Forty-two percent of committee assignments were on committees having students.

Consultation before Appointment

In preliminary discussion with personnel serving on committees, an occasional complaint was raised that people were not consulted before being given committee assignments about their willingness to serve or their appropriateness for the assignments. Such complaints reflect some ambiguity regarding whether service on committees is voluntary or part of job requirements. More than that, some people felt that prior consultation would ensure that only individuals interested in a committee's

Table IV

Committee Assignments on Committees Having Various Membership Categories

Membership Category	Number of Assignments	Percentage of all Assignments
Faculty	262	61%
Students	180	42
Faculty and Students	151	35
University Service Personnel	133	31
Community Representatives	56	13
Other	44	10

work become members. Absenteeism at meetings is a constant problem in committee work, and this may be the result of some members not being committed to the groups' activities.

To ascertain the degree to which prior consultation had been made, the questionnaire requested this information from respondents. Of the 412 committee assignments for which responses were made, 24% had not involved prior consultation. Table V shows the breakdown according to bureaus and according to committee assignment groupings by appointing official. Apparently, bureau directors are in a better position to consult with staff members before assignments, at least among those in their own offices.

Monthly Averages of Committee Meeting Hours

Committee assignments can be time-consuming, and one of the problems in committee activities is often that members are pressed for time because of their major duties in the bureaus. The questionnaire asked people to indicate how many hours per month they spent in meetings for each committee. For the 356 responses to this question, the average number of hours per month is 4.3. The distribution according to number of hours is presented in Table VI, with one to four hours indicated by 71% of those responding. The reader is cautioned that these are self-determined figures, and so some of the higher amounts may be the result of respondents indicating particular months of intense committee activity.

Table VII shows the average hours of committee meetings by bureau membership, ranging from two to nine hours. The table also shows the average hours according to officials who appointed the committees, with Presidential and Vice Presidential committees involving more hours than those appointed by bureau directors or academic departments.

Table V

Consultation before Assignment according to Bureaus and Appointing Officials

	Percentage of Assignments with Prior Consultation	Percentage of Assignments without Prior Consultation	Number of Committee Assignments
Total Sample	76%	24%	412
Bureaus			
Central Office	82	18	27
Admissions and Records	80	20	59
Boynton Health Service	80	20	60
Campus Assistance Center	67	33	9
Unions	67	33	21
Housing	84	16	38
International Student Adviser's Office	92	8	17
Martin Luther King Program	100	0	7
Minnesota Women's Center	60	40	15
Orientation	100	0	2
Recreational Sports	64	36	11
St. Paul Office for Student Affairs	80	20	5
Special Counseling	67	33	3
Student Activities Center	90	10	19
Student Counseling Bureau	61	39	79
Student Financial Aid Office	82	18	11
Student Life Studies and Planning	94	6	16
Student Organization Finance	0	100	3
Appointing Officials			
President	79	21	63
Vice President for Student Affairs	71	29	89
Bureau Directors	84	16	123
Academic Departments	75	25	61

Table VI

Distribution of Monthly Hours of Committee Meetings

Hours	Percentage of Committee Assignments
0	1.1%
1	20.5
2	17.1
3	13.5
4	19.9
5	4.5
6	8.4
7	2.0
8	4.2
9	.6
10	4.2
11 - 20	2.8
21 - 48	1.2
	100.0

(N = 356)

Table VII

Monthly Averages of Committee Meetings Hours according to Bureaus and Appointing Officials

	Sum of Monthly Hours	Average of Monthly Hours	Number of Committee Assignments
Total Sample	1528	4.3	356
Bureaus			
Central Office	124	4.6	27
Admissions and Records	141	2.7	53
Boynton Health Service	98	2.1	46
Campus Assistance Center	61	4.0	15
Unions	104	5.5	19
Housing	206	5.9	35
International Student Adviser's Office	139	7.1	17
Martin Luther King Program	28	4.7	6
Minnesota Women's Center	135	9.0	15
Orientation	8	4.0	2
Recreational Sports	35	3.2	11
St. Paul Office for Student Affairs	19	4.8	4
Special Counseling	10	5.0	2
Student Activities Center	59	4.2	14
Student Counseling Bureau	239	3.8	63
Student Financial Aid Office	25	2.5	10
Student Life Studies and Planning	88	6.3	14
Student Organization Finance	9	3.0	3
Appointing Officials			
President	282	4.9	58
Vice President for Student Affairs	432	5.1	84
Bureau Directors	403	3.9	104
Academic Departments	168	3.5	48

Perceived Roles on Committees

Because personnel served on a variety of committees appointed by different officials, we were interested in knowing how members perceived their roles on committees. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate for whom they were speaking while participating in committee discussions. Recognizing that committee members may perceive themselves as speaking for different people at different times, we asked individuals to indicate the primary person or group for whom they felt they were speaking or representing.

People were also asked to indicate for whom they felt they should be speaking. In only 7% of the cases, however, did people state that they should be speaking for someone other than whom they felt they were speaking for.

Table VIII shows the distribution of the 366 responses to the question regarding whom people were representing. The number of committee assignments made by the President, Vice President for Student Affairs, bureau directors, academic departments, and the respondents are also listed for reference.

When the committee assignments are grouped by the appointing officials responsible for naming the largest numbers of people, a distribution for the person or group for whom committee members were speaking is obtained. This is shown in Table IX. Blanks indicate figures less than 10%.

Predictably, a greater percentage of people saw themselves speaking for the Vice President when appointed by the President or Vice President than when appointed by a bureau director or academic department. In general, Presidential or Vice Presidential committees are more likely to call for roles as representatives. Committee assignments made by

Table VIII

Distribution of Responses regarding Whom Committee Members Represent

Person or Group Being Represented	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses	Number of Committee Assignments Made
President	4	1.1%	69
Vice President for Student Affairs	55	15.0	97
Bureau	116	31.8	
Bureau Director	18	4.9	129
Academic Department	8	2.2	63
Respondent (Yourself)	100	27.3	20
Students	25	6.8	
Faculty	17	4.6	
Other	3	.8	
Don't Know	20	5.5	
	366	100.0	378

Table IX

Distribution of Responses regarding Whom Committee Members Represent

According to Appointing Officials

Appointing Official	President	Vice President for Student Affairs	Bureau	Bureau Director	Respondent (Yourself)	Academic Department	Students	Faculty
President (N = 62)		42%	26%		16%			
Vice President for Student Affairs (N = 84)		27%	23%		27%			
Bureau Director (N = 112)			48%		28%			
Academic Department (N = 50)			20%		40%	12%		18%

(Blanks indicate figures less than 10%.)

academic departments show the largest percentage of people who considered that they were speaking for themselves, and this is not surprising since a staff member's affiliation with the Office for Student Affairs is not always relevant to the work of these committees. The articulation with academic departments does not seem to be in terms of individuals representing either the Vice President or their bureaus but according to other categories with which individuals identify. Of interest is the fact that for none of the four groupings by appointing official did more than ten percent indicate they were primarily speaking for students.

Conclusion

Assessment of whether or not committees are serving as integrating structures in the Office for Student Affairs is largely a subjective judgment. The data seem to indicate that such integration is occurring to some extent, though there is a degree of concentration of committee assignments among a limited number of individuals. The extent of articulation with segments of the University is more apparent from the membership category figures.

The statistics alone do not answer questions which may be posed about policies or future developments for OSA committees. The data were compiled to present a picture of the extent of OSA personnel's participation on committees of all kinds so that this can be used as a basis for discussion and decision.

The authors wish to thank Marilyn Sheehan for her assistance in compiling the data.

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Appendix I

Rates of Response to the Questionnaire

Bureau	Number of Personnel in Bureau	Number of Responses	Percentage Responding
Central Office	2	2	100%
Admissions and Records	35	28	80
Boynton Health Service	50	43	86
Campus Assistance Center	3	3	100
Unions	8	7	88
Housing	18	16	89
International Student Adviser's Office	7	6	86
Martin Luther King Program	6	2	33
Minnesota Women's Center	3	2	67
Orientation	2	2	100
Parents	1	0	0
Recreational Sports	8	6	75
St. Paul Office for Student Affairs	1	1	100
Special Counseling	1	1	100
Student Activities Center	7	6	86
Student Counseling Bureau	39	32	82
Student Financial Aid Office	16	12	75
Student Life Studies and Planning	4	4	100
Student Organization Finance	2	2	100
	213	175	